

GOOD WORK

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WITH LIPS OR WITH HEART



THE PRIME REASON why *Good Work* is published is the popularization of a simple but almost wholly forgotten idea. We are convinced that the understanding of this idea is of great importance in our times, and that the neglect into which it has fallen is the cause of much evil, error, and ugliness. It is our aim to explain this idea as forcefully as we can.

Until the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the idea was so commonplace that it was seldom put into words. It seems to have been taken for granted all over the world just as the idea of health would be taken for granted in a society where there was no sickness.

It is this. Human beings have a capacity for modifying their environment for the better, and a natural inclination to exercise this ability. The capacity grows with practice. People like to make things, we say, but have to learn how before they can thoroughly enjoy the making of them well. Until, under the influence of various philosophic theories, the word was given a new and narrower meaning, this general human power was known as *art*, or *the virtue of art*. An artist was not thought of, as he usually is today, as a special kind of person, but every normal person was thought of as a special sort of artist. Skillful physicians, navigators, and cooks, were artists as well as poets and painters.

St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the few thinkers who took the trouble to define this accepted idea. He said that art was a virtue of the practical intelligence concerned with the making of things, and that it was right reason with regard to things to be made.

We of The Catholic Art Association take this idea seriously. We find that an honest study of human production in its *breadth* as well as its *depth* quickly drives away the bewilderments and confusions that bedevil most discussions of art today.

Those Catholics who pay lip service to the Thomistic definitions of art and then proceed to expound their own Kantian or Hegelian views will usually protest that St. Thomas means one thing by *art* and they another, and that they are merely following accepted verbal usage. But St. Thomas was not concerned with words but with things. He used the word *art* for human production in its widest and deepest sense because that is what he was talking about, and because the word had never been used in any other. We give the word the same meaning not to be antiquarian or "different" but because we can find no other that expresses this meaning as well. If a less equivocal and equally expressive word is found we will use it.

Good Work is published in the hope of restoring the word *art* to its former dignity, so that a beginning may be made toward restoring its dignity to human *work*. Who doubts that the ennobling of work would undo many of the evils that have fallen on mankind? As Plato and Mencius have both taught us, the beginning of the reform of a society must be the reform of its language. The language of "art" has been allowed to fall into an almost incredible state of decay. The degeneration ranges from a rather innocent use of undefined terms to a squid-like reliance upon complete gibberish. All who are deeply concerned about artistic things must be forgiven for insisting on the necessity of clarifying the words that stand for those things.

MOUSETRAPS AND CHEESE

AN INTERVIEW

ABOUT FOUR MILES WEST OF Ludlow, Vermont, near the top of the Green Mountain water shed, an unpaved road leaves Route 103 and winds away uphill toward the south. Twenty years ago, when I first visited the Crowley cheese factory, the fork was marked by an ancient signboard on which, though time had almost obliterated it, one could read the single word "Crowley". Five years ago the sign was still there and the name still barely legible, but the board dangled precariously from its wobbly post. When I revisited the establishment in July 1960 the sign had disappeared, and only a hazy memory of the road itself led me to hope that I had taken the

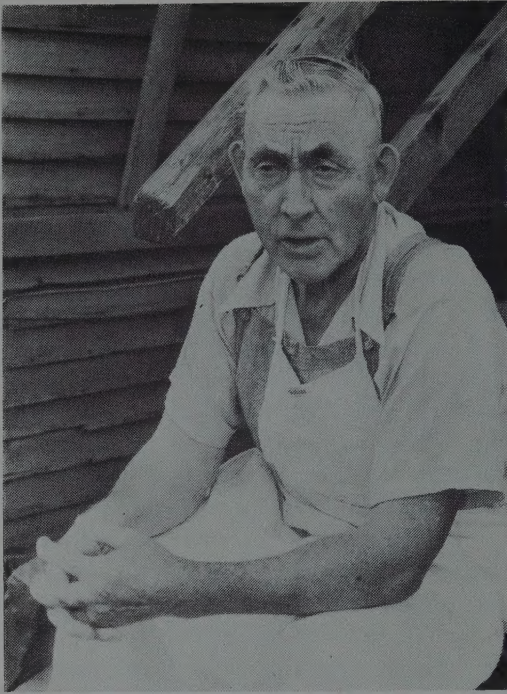
right turn. George A. Crowley evidently does not believe in advertising.

And yet Crowley's cheese is famous not only all over Vermont, but is sold to connoisseurs in almost every state in the Union, and has been shipped to some score of foreign countries. It really looks as if Emerson were still right, and that the world will beat a path to the door of the man who produces quality, whether it be in church organs or in mouse traps.

We followed the narrow climbing road, through woods in which the predominance of sharp pointed conifers indicated the altitude of this remote part of the state—took a wrong turning once, were put on the right one, and came after



A HUNDRED YEARS AGO small cheese factories like this were common in almost every township in Vermont. By conscientious insistence on the maintenance of high quality in its product, this small business remains profitable in a world where bigness and efficiency are apt to be equated.



GEORGE CROWLEY inherited his business from his father, and has carried it on successfully through the economic ups and downs of his lifetime.

a couple of miles or so to the factory. It was exactly as I had remembered it. A weathered wooden building, the somewhat battered appearance of which seemed not to have changed either by the repair man's hammer or the painter's brush. I was relieved, for I had feared to find changes; and when changes occur in anything as good as Crowley's cheese factory, they are not necessarily for the better.

Mr. Crowley greeted us with the reserved courtesy of the old-time Vermont-er. He did not remember us—there was no reason why he should have—but he was glad to talk a little about his business and to let my wife take photographs. No, he does not advertise. He sells all the cheese he can make, so why should he? He does not believe in financing and expansion. No one has a cent of money in

the concern except himself. A man once offered to go into partnership with him and help him develop the business. "I told him," said Mr. Crowley gently, "that I thought I would rather run it myself."

What he does believe in is quality, and the maintaining of quality. "I have always told the boys that if we keep up our standards we will not get into any serious trouble. We have kept up our quality, and our reputation has spread. We try to be cordial to anyone who comes to visit us, but we work seven days a week, and we don't welcome visitors on Sundays."

I asked about the origins of the business. He reminded me that back in the 1870s and 1880s there was no refrigeration, and therefore no shipping of fluid milk out of Vermont. So every township in the state had from a couple to a half dozen small cheese-making factories, usually operated by a farmer as a side line to take care of the milk marketing problem for himself and his neighbors. As a child, George's father, Alfred Winfield Crowley, used to watch his mother making cheese in her kitchen. The process did not seem too difficult to learn, but when in 1882 he set up a small plant of his own, he hired a man from New York State to get him started.

Even when Vermont farmers began to ship fluid milk, it was often difficult, at this high altitude, to get the cans out to the railroad station when the snow was deep on the winter roads. The presence of the Crowley factory was a help to the neighborhood with this problem also. And today, when the centralizing policies of the giant milk companies are squeezing many small farmers out of existence, Crowley's plant enables many a man who could not afford a bulk tank to keep a small herd with a sure market, and work at an outside trade as well. It is a vital element in the maintainance of local economic independence.

Mr. Crowley the founder died in 1935,

and his son George inherited the business in which he had always taken an active part. Then, ten years ago, George's son Robert came to work for his father. Besides the two Crowleys, the staff is completed by Mrs. Clyde Howland, who keeps the books and lends a hand with the packaging, and her son-in-law, Arnold Butler. These four constitute the personnel of the plant.

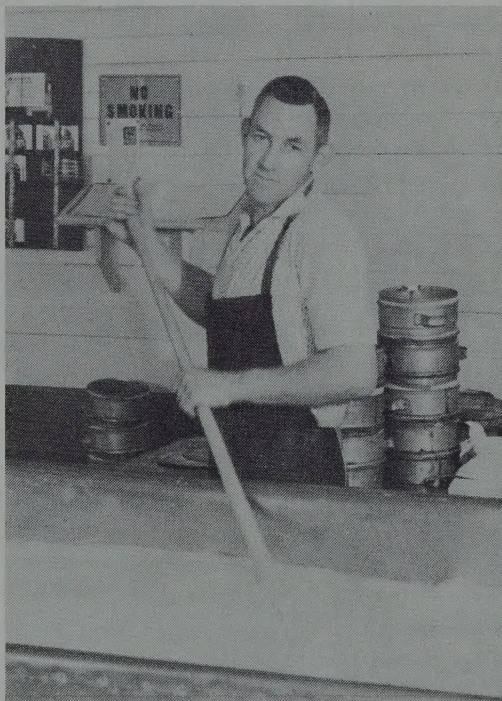
About two hundred and thirty thousand pounds of cheese are sold each year. An average of six thousand pounds of milk, or a little better, is processed daily, the product of about twenty-five small herds, or three hundred cows. None of the butter fat is removed from the milk. The milk does not drop below 3.6 percent butter fat, and this gives a cheese that tests 3.5, one percent of fat being lost in the whey. State inspectors test the milk periodically for bacteria, and the cheese for fat and moisture content. "We try to meet the government requirements" said George Crowley, "not only to avoid trouble with them, but because the regulations make for a good product."

The greater part of the sales are by mail order, but about one tenth of the customers come personally to the factory. A good percentage of these can probably remember the days when there was a sign out on Route 103 to direct them.

I asked Mr. Crowley about competitors. He said that he didn't very much like to use that word about other cheese makers. "I don't like to think of other people starting cheese making as competing with me. There is plenty of room. I will be glad to help anyone who wants to make a start if he plans to make the same type that I make. Of course, very few do." He went on to explain that his type of cheese is *Colby*. He did not know where the name originated, but he did know that this was one of the only two successful types of cheese developed in this country. All the others use the names of various

European cheeses, and try to imitate them, but they never succeed in a very perfect reproduction of a product which is necessarily made under such different conditions. Colby is something like cheddar, but it is not really as much like it as people seem to think. George Crowley's views on competition and mutual aid would have delighted the ear of the late Prince Petr Kropotkin.

The making of cheese is a laboratory process, and if the organisms on which its quality depends are to develop as they should, all the utensils and containers used have to be rigidly sterile. But nothing could present an appearance, either inside or outside, less like that of a laboratory. The arrangement of floor space was obviously the result of long years of practical experience rather than of any theoretical system of order. There were



HIS SON ROBERT works with him. He is shown here stirring one of the two big vats of milk that will soon be solidifying into curds.

no white tiles, no waxed floors, no little white coats. But all was clean, the wood of the great vats scrubbed, and the metal linings gleaming.

The maintainance of quality seems to depend a great deal on the judgement of the senses; on touch, smell, taste, and even sound, as well as on a constantly repeated schedule. Robert explained that here was an advantage of the small over the big producer. Milk is not like distilled water—a material that can be counted on to react in standard fashion to standard treatment. Milk is highly complex and varies from season to season, and even from day to day. To yield the best results its complexity and variability must be realistically dealt with. The differences between the procedures of the large plant and the small one are only differences of degree, but the small man can rely more on the trained senses of his helpers and less on readings from instruments and formulae



ARNOLD BUTLER "knows as much about making cheese as any of us" says Mr. Crowley. Here he is shown dipping cheeses in melted paraffine.

adjusted to them. The Crowleys use instruments—the clock, the thermometer, and a few others—but for accurate judgement of the various stages of the process they rely less on these than on the direct reports of their highly trained senses—sniffing, nibbling, and squeezing. A large factory cannot expect its employees to have had the long practice that makes such a sensitive method possible, and must rely on a more rigid scheduling based on pointer indications.

The milk is first heated to 85°, and then allowed to set for from two and a half to three and a half hours. The whey is then drained off, the solidity and acidity of the curds being judged to be just right. In this judgement not only feeling, odor, and taste are invoked, but the peculiar squeak of the rubbery curds when chewed. When the right point is reached, salt is stirred in to halt the development of acidity, and the curds are pressed into five pound and thirty-five pound round cakes. Each cheese is marked with the date, and they are set on shelves to cure in semi-darkness. Mild cheeses remain on the shelves for three months, and sharp cheeses from six to eight months. By government regulation, no cheese can be sold until it is sixty days old.

Each of the two big vats (see page 5) though fourteen and sixteen feet long, has only about half the capacity of a day's processing, so two batches, as just described, are run through together, one an hour behind the other. These two runs take about six hours. The rest of the working day is devoted to cleaning up, details of business, and attention to visitors.

Mr. Crowley has been urged to use oil for the firing of the steam boiler that heats the vats, but he continues to use coal and wood. Oil blowers depend on electricity, and a failure of power such as not infrequently happens might easily ruin hundreds of pounds in the making.



MRS. CLYDE HOWLAND, Arnold's mother-in-law, is the fourth member of the Crowley team. She keeps the books, and supplies the feminine touch which all businesses require.

Replying to a question, Mr. Crowley said that he had no fears for the future of the business unless the small dairies which supply him are unable to keep in production. Milk is something that is both bought and sold. His neighbors sell it to him, and he buys it from them. These transactions are for mutual profit. As long as he keeps up his standards of quality which ensure *his* market with the outside world, he sees nothing in the future to alarm him.

The discovery of antibiotic medicines and their application to mastitis in dairy cattle for a while raised serious problems for milk processors whose work involved the development of organisms. Careless dairymen sold milk containing amounts of penicillin and other drugs which upset the balanced action of the micro-organisms which were responsible for the cheese. With some of the large companies, the problems raised by these practices were often acute. But this difficulty did

not touch the Crowley plant very closely. The State Department of Health acted promptly and firmly, and careless farmers were given effective penalties. Besides, because the Crowley suppliers were only a couple of dozen small herdsmen, and were his neighbors as well as business associates, Mr. Crowley's requests that they should be very careful in this matter were respected. The periodic government tests have shown no trace of antibiotics in the samples that have been taken from the Crowley plant.

The only change that I was aware of since I had first talked with Mr. Crowley in 1940 was an encouraging one. At that time I was rather shocked to have him tell me that it was his practice to dispose of his whey by dumping it into a pipe which led to the brook. All the milk sugar and other mineral nutrients, some of the most valuable constituents of the milk, were thus totally wasted. I asked



ABOUT 230,000 POUNDS of cheese are sold annually. Mild cheeses are stored for about three months and sharper ones from two to three times as long.

then whether he could not evaporate the whey and produce a crude milk sugar, using evaporators similar to those used in maple sugar production—or, at least, whether the fresh whey could not be fed back to calves and pigs. He said that milk sugar could not be profitably produced except on a much larger scale. But on this last visit I was glad to have him tell me that he now pours his whey into a large tank, and invites his suppliers to help themselves to whatever they want to take back to the farm for the use of their animals.

In addition to this good news, Mr. Crowley said that the agronomists at the University of Vermont's department of agriculture have been urging him to make some experiments in the application of whey to the land for the increase of soil

fertility. They told him of experiments that have already been made, in which a generous spraying with whey on newly cut meadows has resulted in heavy second and third cuttings of good quality forage. That is the sort of policy change that seems a good deal more constructive than white tiles, shiny chromium, and white coats.

During our last visit to the Crowley factory a number of other visitors came in. As we left, we met an almost steady succession of cars grinding up the last steep mile of the road. Here we encountered a situation similar to that at Peter Limmer's shoe shop (*Good Work*, Christmas 1959). These people are welcome customers, but they can be a problem. Certain processes in cheese making require exact timing, and careful watching, which politeness to visiting enthusiasts cannot be allowed to interfere with. The Crowleys, having started the working day at 7:30 a.m., aim to finish up at four; but often, if there have been many visitors, they do not close the door until six, or even later.

One danger to the future of his business George Crowley did not mention. It is a small cloud on the horizon, and perhaps he has not noticed it. Milk is a concentrator of the poison Strontium 90 from atom fallout. It is hoped that, as this airborne toxicity increases, means will be devised to cleanse milk of it. Those that have considered this problem seem agreed that the technical difficulties of a decontamination process will be so great that only very large and scientifically equipped dairies can undertake it. This may be a happy day for the big processing concerns, who will thus be rid of the always annoying presence of independent producers, but it will be a sad one for democracy as Thomas Jefferson understood the word. Big Brother will make the decisions, and there will be no need for paths to the doors of those who invent mousetraps.

"DISTORTION" OR TRANSFORMATION

by GRAHAM CAREY

While agreeing heartily with that you write under the heading of Distortion, I wish that the word could have been avoided altogether. It means something unnatural and undesirable, and it is commonly and rightly used in that sense. But if one pours water from a cylindrical vessel into a conical one, the water is not distorted. It takes a new and appropriate shape, as the ivory-carver's thought takes appropriate shape in the tusk. Distortion twists things out of shape. Art, if it twists things, twists them into shape. Representations are things translated—thoughts imaged—imaginings embodied—above all, things transfigured."

Philip Haggreen

TO ME, AT LEAST, it seems clear that in these words, taken from a letter commenting on an article in the Pentecost 1959 issue of *The Catholic Art Quarterly*, Mr. Haggreen has put his finger on the weak spot in all the discussions—ours as well as other people's—which continue to be held on what is called "Distortion in the Arts". The key word, *distortion*, is equivocal. It has two distinct and contradictory meanings. Used correctly it stands for something abnormal; used incorrectly, for something normal.

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary says that to distort is to "twist or wrench to one side . . . to put out of shape or position by twisting or drawing awry . . . to change to an unnatural shape, to pervert." It gives as examples; "a mirror which distorts the features", and "words distorted from their common use." There is no doubt that the word *distortion*, used correctly, stands for a bad thing.

But in discussing the fine arts this bad word is often used as one of praise—as standing for something good. And I mean really good! The good thing is this. Between an object represented and its representation (for instance, between a sitter and the portrait made of him) there is

normally a distinct difference of appearance. What the two have in common—what is carried over from man to painting—is not the appearance but the essence or nature of the man. At least, that is the portrait painter's intention. When the bad word *distortion* is used to stand for this normal shift in appearance, a bad word is standing for a good thing, and that causes confusion.

An eagle carved on the face of a stone building should not be naturalistic because if it is so the representation will defeat its purpose, which is architectural. A mother with her baby carved in granite cannot be naturalistic, because the nature of the material forbids such a treatment. A landscape painter using a palette knife cannot indulge in naturalism, for that is impossible to achieve with the means he has decided to use. And all works of art that are truly reproductions of creative mental images cannot be naturalistic because the memory is not strong and accurate enough for naturalism, and to get the details necessary for naturalism into his picture, the artist will have to abandon the imaginative way of painting and adopt the method of copying the exact appearance of the shapes before him. In

each of these four cases the difference between the representation and the thing represented is obvious, and it is a difference which is normal, to be expected, and justified by the realities of the artistic process. Only in examples of *trompe-l'oeil*, of which the most famous are Mme Tussaud's waxworks, is there a serious attempt to eliminate this difference, and this attempt can only be achieved at the sacrifice of other values. All this is obvious enough, but we constantly hear such normal and reasonable departures from naturalism described as *distortion*. That is, we hear a good thing referred to by a name that properly denotes a bad thing.

To get out of the difficulty, it has been suggested that if when we use the word *distortion* in its true sense we write it without quotation marks, and when we use it intentionally in an incorrect sense we enclose it in quotation marks, we will be able to get rid of the equivocation and make our meaning quite clear. But how does this plan work out in practice? The trouble is that we get tangled up in multiple negatives. The good thing is expressed by a bad word used wrongly, and the bad thing is expressed by a bad word used rightly. This plan may eliminate bad logic, but it does not eliminate confusion. Experiments with this method will, I think, make clear that the only practical policy is to use the bad word for the bad thing, and some good word for the good thing. So we must look for a new word for this normal artistic process of shape-change, and condition of shape-difference.

Mr. Hagreen has used a few words that look like good alternatives to the misleading *distortion*;—representation, translation, transfiguration, and embodiment of imaginings. All these words convey the idea which we are trying to express, but each has connotations that tend to disqualify it.

Representation is etymologically equiv-

alent to "make to be again in front", that is, it originally meant to put forward an existing idea in a new guise. But it is rather too general today for our purpose, and carries the connotation of repetition of appearance rather than of essence or form.

Translation expresses our meaning exactly, but in common use is restricted to grammar. When we translate "go home" into "rentrez à la maison" or "geh nach Haus", only a very insular person will feel that an idea has been twisted out of its proper shape or perverted. It is no more distorted than the water which, in Mr. Hagreen's original example, is poured from one vessel into another. It so happens that at the top of page 20 of this issue Mr. Hagreen has used the word *translation* in this broader sense, but in general use this might be confusing to some people.

Transfiguration is also an accurate word for our purpose, but it usually carries the connotation of an increase in value. The transfigured thing is more beautiful or glorious than it was in its former body.

Embodiment of imaginings also is accurate, but is an awkward phrase.

I think that the word *Transformation* has the advantages of all the foregoing words without their disadvantages. It is neither too general nor too restricted in meaning, too exalted nor too humble. Etymologically it gives our meaning exactly—the carrying across of an idea or form into another body.

In future discussions of this artistic problem, we intend to release *distortion* from its present bondage to incorrect and confusing use, and to substitute *transformation*—if a still better word cannot be found. Such an improvement in diction, if generally adopted, might shed a great deal of light on the murk of contemporary art criticism.

ERIC GILL'S COIN DRAWINGS

by GRAHAM CAREY

IN 1924, WHEN HE WAS STILL living on Ditchling Common in Sussex, Eric Gill made a series of drawings for a new set of silver coins for the Royal Mint. These drawings were not used, and recently some of them have come to light. They are of considerable interest, though the artistic ideas that were behind them are of even more.

In *Letters of Eric Gill* (edited by Walter Shewring and published in 1948 by The Devin-Adair Co., New York) there are three letters that mention these coinage drawings:—numbers 120 and 122 written at the time the work was in progress, and number 246 twelve years later. In the first two letters Gill writes that the Mint has asked him, as well as some others, to submit designs for a new silver coinage, that he thinks the work will not take many days to do though he has two months to complete it, and that it seems clear to him that he “should have a go at it.” He adds that the Mint is prepared to abandon heraldry and representations of St. George, and that he has been pondering new symbols. In the 1936 letter he writes that he has made designs for the Mint people several times, that none were used or published, that the drawings are the property of the Mint, and that he himself has only some rough sketches and discarded designs, which are “probably not much good.” It is presumably these preliminary drawings that have now been found.

Gill approached the task he had undertaken in a characteristically methodical way. He visited the British Museum and there studied a display of British coins arranged in chronological sequence from pre-Roman times to the present. After

careful consideration he chose the silver pennies which were struck about 800 A.D. by King Offa of Mercia as being, in his opinion, the most beautiful. On pages 12 and 13 we show photographs of twelve of these coins, both obverse and reverse, and these photographs will serve to indicate the kind of excellence that Gill hoped to achieve in the very different world of industrialized England in 1924.

Eric Gill was not only a sculptor and cutter of stone inscriptions, but he was also a skillful draftsman and wood engraver. Possessing all these abilities and a philosophical mind as well, he was fully aware of the importance of a proper kind of technique to the proper making of any kind of thing. He knew that beauty is the result of—among other causes—reasonable procedures, and it was evident to him that a technique which allows the artist the fullest possible control over his work is the most reasonable one.

He therefore proposed to the authorities of the Royal Mint that, if his designs were accepted, they should be carried out by a competent craftsman using methods of die-sinking similar to those used in King Offa's mints. If no such craftsman could be found, he proposed that one should be trained. And because, in Anglo Saxon times, a good die-sinker was a man with design ability as well as technical ability, so, if aesthetically comparable results were to be expected, this new die-sinker must be a whole artist in his special field. He should be, so to speak, not only instrumentalist, but also composer and arranger of his numismatic music. In other words, what Gill hoped to achieve for the lost art of traditional die-sinking was what Edward Johnston

OBVERSE

REVERSE



I



II



III

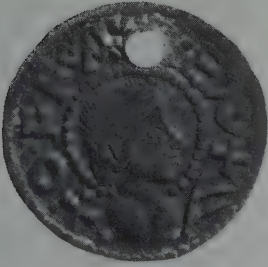


TWELVE SILVER PENNIES OF KING OFFA OF MERCIA

Eric Gill studied the historical exhibition of native coins in the British Museum and came to the decision that those struck about 800 A.D. by King Offa of Mercia were the most beautiful. He believed that this beauty was in large part the result of the technique used by the Anglo-Saxon mint-masters. Crude as their method was, it gave the craftsman the advantage, unknown today, of a realistic approach to his task.

Above are six examples of the British Museum collection of Offa pennies, enlarged to two diameters. The dies from which these coins were struck were worked with steel punches. The photographs are reproduced by courtesy of the Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum.

OBVERSE



IV

REVERSE



V



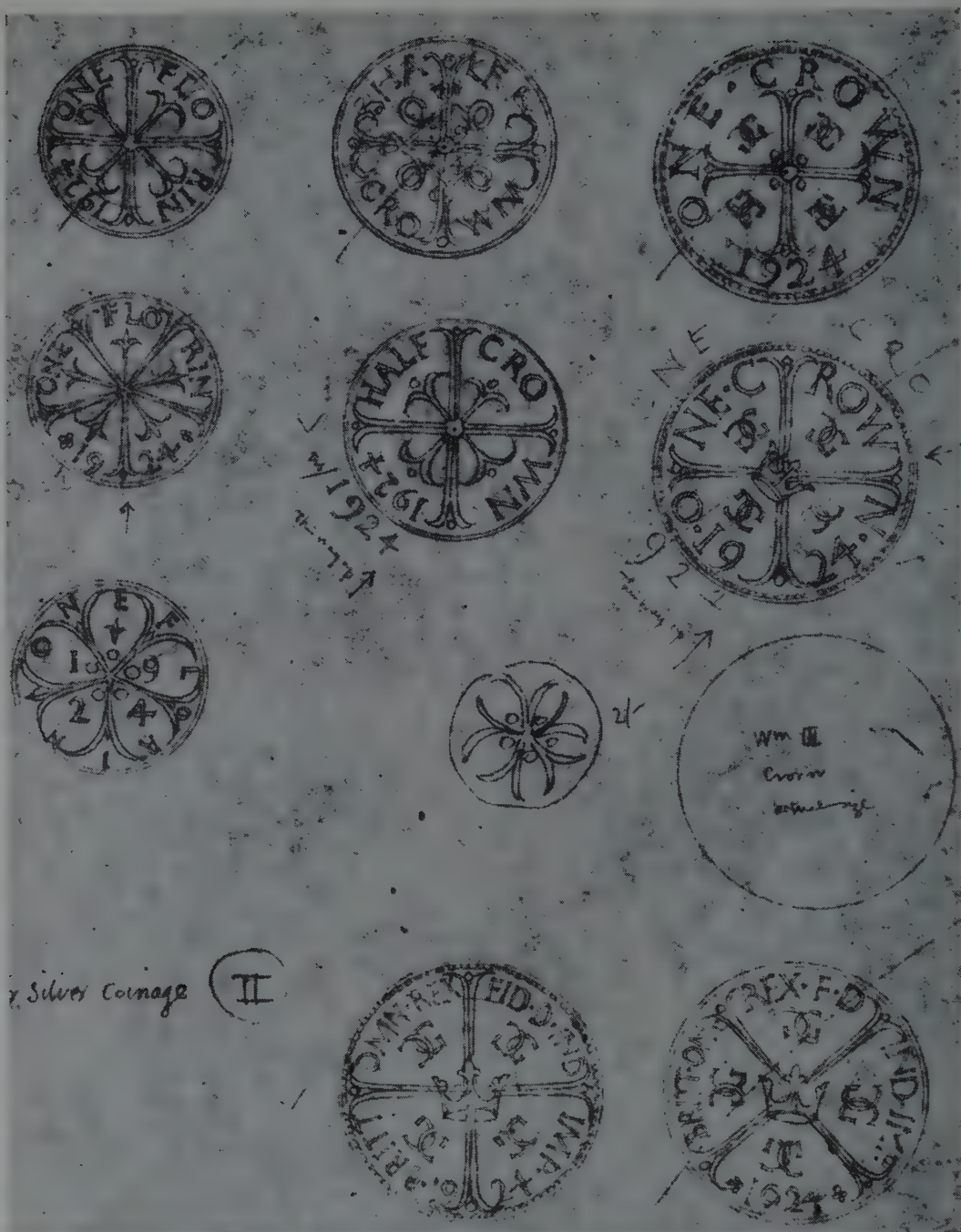
VI



"HAMMERED COINS" STRUCK ABOUT YEAR 800 A.D.

Silver tarnishes black and polishes white. Good silver design uses this fact. The rubbing of a silver piece in use brings out the black and white pattern and whatever beauty it may have. Unfortunately these pieces are tarnished all over, just as they were dug up.

I Rev. shows a cross surrounded by four dots, and II Rev. a cross with twelve. In the ninth century these devices would have been understood as symbols of Christ, with the evangelists in one case and with the apostles in the other. In examples III Rev., IV Rev., and V Obv., these emblems have become floral and merely decorative—perfect examples of the beauty of traditional die-sinking, but apparently without specific meaning.



Rough sketches made for the British Royal Mint in 1924 by the late Eric Gill. These designs were experiments with traditional motives which Mr. Gill hoped to persuade the authorities to reproduce in metal by a pre-industrial technique which allows the artist the maximum of control over his work. The photostat is reproduced by courtesy of Mrs. Eric Gill.

had done for the lost art of calligraphy, and he himself for that of monumental letter cutting.

In King Offa's day coins were struck by a very primitive method which did not differ in principle from that used in Greece and Rome, and which continued in use without much change until late in the seventeenth century. An iron bar about eight inches long was worked to a circular surface at one end and to a sharp spike at the other. Into the flat surface was punched with hardened steel tools an intaglio version of the obverse side of the coin to be made. The spike was driven into a solid wooden support, such as a section of a tree trunk. This tool was called a *pile*. A similar bar of iron was punched at one end with the reverse design in intaglio, and this was called a *trussel*. The work of striking was usually done by two men. One put a silver blank of the right weight on the face of the pile and with his other hand held the trussel upright upon it. The other man gave the butt end of the trussel a sharp blow with a heavy hammer, a blow sufficient to force the softer silver into the punch marks in both pile and trussel. Thus wherever there were depressed lines and dots in the iron tools, the silver coin showed raised lines and dots. The fact that a trussel wore out from two to three times as fast as a pile explains why it was the trussel that bore the simpler reverse design.

The modern method of striking coins is of course much more exact, rapid, and powerful. Mechanically operated drop hammers and knuckle presses can exert tremendous pressures on the metal blank, and are faster and capable of much more exact work than the old method by which "hammered coins", as they are called, were produced. It is true, however, that the most beautiful coins made have resulted from the less efficient means, and that most of the coins and medals produced industrially have been ugly.

This apparent contradiction is explained by the fact that the beauty of a coin depends very little on how it is struck, but much on the quality of the die it is struck from. A sonnet by Shakespeare is a beautiful poem whether it is well or badly printed. It is better that it should be well printed, but its beauty depends on the pattern of words and ideas which has been given it by its author. So with coinage. The beauty of the coin does not depend, or depends very little, on the striking mechanism, simple or complex, but on the art of the die-sinker. It is for this reason that there should be the closest possible relation between the designer and the executor of the dies, that the design should be thought out by the man who uses the tools that shape the die, and thought out while he is shaping the die with them. This, of course, means that the designer and the die maker should be the same person, and it was of this truth that Gill hoped to persuade the authorities of the Royal Mint. He was not so much trying to get them to accept a set of drawings as to accept a set of ideas. The drawings were actually hardly more than the salesman's foot in the door. For the final designs the die-sinker entrusted with the job must be responsible.

What, then, was the ancient and aesthetically successful method of die making, and what is the modern and aesthetically unsuccessful method? The faces of the iron trussel and pile were worked into an intaglio design by punching and by engraving. We need not enter here into the merits of these two methods. Both were used effectively in ancient times. During the Anglo-Saxon and early Norman periods in England, the graver was scarcely used, almost all the work of die-sinking being done by punches. Thus the pennies of King Offa have the beauty of good punched work. The die-sinker took a small rod of softened tool steel, filed one end into the shape he wished to



Drawings at final size and considerably enlarged. Again the motive is traditional and formal. The design obviously fits the coin, the bounding circle being a logical part of the pattern. The lines were to have been engraved and the dots punched on the steel die.



Here the artist attempted a modern symbol, but did not succeed in finding a pattern formal enough to decorate a small circular surface. This is really a bit of formalized landscape and the circular limit is arbitrary. Both photostats reproduced by courtesy of Mrs. Gill.



The ear of wheat was often successfully used by ancient Greek coin makers. This design is well adapted to expression by the chosen technique, is sufficiently related to the surface to be decorated, and is a good symbol of prosperity and abundance.

Photostat reproductions by courtesy of Mrs. Gill.

appear on the coin, hardened and tempered the punch, and with it dented the face of the softer iron die. In filing and polishing the end of the steel punch, he was as good as looking at and working on a detail of his silver design, at the final size, in a metallic material, and in positive form. He was in close contact with the technical realities of his task. He knew exactly what he was doing, and his aesthetic sense was able to warn him at once of failure to achieve his intention. When he had finished his punches, and was using them on the die face, he was no longer working in relief but in intaglio, but he was still working at the final size, and in metal. By taking wax impressions of the die as he proceeded, he was able to correct errors and bring his work to perfection. These are some of the more obvious advantages of the older and simpler method. But today the coin designer who uses the accepted numismatic technique has few of these advantages. Victor Hammer, the designer and punch-cutter of the famous Hammer Uncial type, once said, "A machine works in the dark." It can be said with truth that the designer for a machine works in only a half light. There are so many circumstances in which he cannot use his aesthetic faculty, but has to guess. The coin designer is an example. After his first sketches have been accepted, he makes a large clay or plastecene relief. From this he takes a plaster negative, which is simultaneously reduced in size and cut in steel by a most ingenious machine known as the pantographic die-cutter.

Without going into detail, this is the general process by which dies for coins and medals are made today. It is admirable mechanically, but the designer is far away from the material in which he should be sensitively working. He is working at a size and in a material that are deceptive. His lack of knowledge of his ultimate materials and tools, and his lack of control

over them, are matched by the lack of knowledge of design and lack of control over the design which handicap the die-maker. A single artist who is both creator and technician has been divided into two half-artists; and two half-artists trying to cooperate do not add up to a single man in possession of the whole of his art.

Gill may not have realized this situation in all its details. He could not be expected to have realized them for he had had no practical experience of the die-sinker's craft. But he recognized the general truth very clearly indeed, as his published writings show. He continually exhorted his readers to use simple and controllable techniques whenever possible, and warned them not to expect from a mechanical operation what a mechanical operation cannot in the nature of things give. And he realized that there were no traditional craftsmen left, to whom such a job could be entrusted. He therefore proposed to the Mint committee that he should train one for this specific work. The man whom he proposed to train was Philip Hagreen, an artist who was thoroughly in sympathy with his aesthetic ideas, who was a highly skillful engraver of both wood and metal, and who was at the time an assistant in his letter carving shop. Readers of *Good Work* are familiar with Mr. Hagreen's work as a wood engraver. Mr. Hagreen has described the plan which Gill proposed in these words:

" Our characterless and lifeless coins come from the elimination of craftsmanship in the making of the dies. Eric intended that dies should be made from his designs by a die-sinker using gravers and punches in the traditional way. He saw, however, that contemporary die-sinkers had vastly more skill than they had understanding of the appropriate use of their medium. He knew that they would slavishly follow his designs without translating them into the language of steel. He therefore proposed that a beginner whom

he was teaching and who understood his aims should work for a few months in the shop of an expert die-sinker. Eric thought the beginner would then be capable of interpreting the designs, but would avoid anything that did not come naturally from the use of the tools."

The drawings were not accepted by the authorities of the Mint. It seems reasonable to suppose that the deciding factor was Gill's revolutionary plan for training a die-sinker capable of working successfully by a pre-industrial method. To most government officials such a proposal would naturally sound fantastic, and if the plan were successful it would provide a very distasteful criticism of progressive industrialism in general. One wonders whether anyone was much surprised that the drawings were returned to the artist.

And now for the designs themselves. What must be our judgement of them? It seems clear to the present writer that they have two faults, for one of which the patron was entirely responsible, and the other of which would have been corrected as the work proceeded. The patron's fault was in the choice of subject matter. The device on a good coin should be legible at arm's length, and this means that it should be both simple and formal. Gill did what he could for legibility in making the lettering as large as possible, but what could he do with such an assignment as power-lines stretching across the country, or with a landscape containing factories belching smoke from their chimneys? If such subjects could be numismatically formalized it would have to be at a sacrifice of realism that would be unacceptable to mint and public like. Such scenes are subjects essentially unsuited to the special art of coin design.

The other fault was the result of Gill's lack of experience with the craft for which he was designing. The letters are much too delicate and thin. They have not

the proportions or the scale that is suited to traditional die-sinking, but are the letters that he was accustomed to cutting in large inscriptions. This tendency to over-refinement appears especially in the One Crown piece with the moline cross (page 16). Here the emblem is perfectly suited to a formal arrangement, but it would be much improved if the graver cuts had been a little wider, the punched dots set a little closer, the letters higher and heavier—thus forming a more continuous band. I am convinced that Gill would have agreed heartily with this criticism as soon as he or Mr. Hagreen began to work on the steel itself, taking wax impressions as they went along. For after all, it was essential to his plan that these drawings were *not* be to slavishly copied, but were to be interpreted, and translated "into the language of steel." It was his intention that the die-sinker should "avoid anything that did not come naturally from the use of the tools." Gill had never learned that language, and was well aware that he had not. He knew that whatever idiomatic faults these drawings might show would be corrected by the realistic process of translation.

And so, I am convinced, they would have been. It is not at all surprising that Gill was unable to convince his committee that, if they wanted a really fine silver coinage—a series of pieces that could be aesthetically compared with the best work of antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Orient—they would have to accept his ideas and let him carry through the die-making in a way consonant with them. But it is nevertheless deplorable. Here was a chance of a fruitful collaboration between a public service, with a long tradition of integrity, and equipped with all the machinery necessary for production, and a couple of very unusual artists. The opportunity was lost, and will probably not soon occur again.

THE SANTONS OF PROVENCE

by DANIEL J. FOLEY

CHRISTMAS COMES ONLY once; but Easter is always here", is a cherished proverb in Provence, where the Christmas crèche has a unique kind of charm. The making of the tiny clay figures known as santons and the setting of the crèche itself are a curious combination of childlike naiveté and craftsmanship animated by simple faith and warm devotion. For a century and a half village craftsmen and their families have devoted their spare hours throughout the year to the fashioning of the "little saints", and these are sold at the great Christmas fairs held each year in early December at Marseilles and at Aix.

About 1800 a group of Italian peddlers from Naples appeared in the streets of Marseilles selling small religious figures made of brightly colored plaster. These were known as *santi belli*, and included the Virgin Mary, various saints, bishops, and the Pope. Attracted by the appeal which these brightly colored images had for the local populace, artisans and craftsmen began to make similar figures of the common red clay used for pottery.

At about this time, a macaroni maker named Antoine Maurel wrote a delightful fantasy, a kind of mystery play featuring the Nativity, which he called "Pastorale". It dramatized the story of how the shepherds learned of the Messiah's birth on that first Christmas Eve in Bethlehem and led to the holy stable the whole village, including other shepherds whom they met, and peasants whom they awakened—to bring greetings and gifts to the

Christ Child. This play delighted the people so that the santon makers modeled shepherds in various poses to put in little Christmas cribs which were becoming popular for home use in Provence. The various actors in the play served as models for the santon makers, and these were added to the number of figures to be used in the little Christmas crèches. These included the mayor; an old man named Jourdan with his lantern; Margarido, the village gossip, with her umbrella, sometimes shown walking and sometimes on a donkey; simple-minded Bartoumieu, with his *fougasse* cake; Giget and his codfish; and a number of other local characters.



Mr. Foley is a professional horticulturist but has a wide range of other interests. Catholic Art Association members will long remember his illustrated lecture on Mary Gardens at the recent convention in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

The actors of the "Pastorale", though depicting an event that happened at the beginning of the Christian era, were dressed in the fashions of the early nineteenth century, just as the Romans and Greeks in Racine's classical tragedies wore wigs and costumes of the time of Louis XVI. The same convention was followed by the santon makers. These figures were habited not only according to their period but according to their locality. They are country people from the villages of Aubagne, Roquevaine, Auriol, and Aix. They include the peasant in his blue smock, with a garland of silver-skinned onions around his neck, the peasant's wife, with an enormous basket of vegetables and a couple of chickens, and the woman with a green and yellow pottery jug.

As time went on, each santon maker



THE HUNTER, proud as a king wearing his crown, brings the rabbit he has just shot to the newly born Christ.



THE FISH WIFE, a big woman of coarse manners but of warm heart, brings a present of two baskets of fish.

developed his own series of characters, who represented the peasants and artisans of his particular village. These were grouped with their gifts around the Holy Family, and each had a story to tell. Here were the knife grinder, the local judge, the washerwoman, the gypsy, the thief, the drummer boy, the blind man, the town crier, the faggot woman, the herb gatherer, and so forth.

The gardener carries flowers in one hand and a watering can in the other. His cotton trousers, yellow shirt without tie, open waistcoat, and pointed straw hat are those of most countryside gardeners. The hunter has just that triumphant look that all the hunters that you meet in Provence have during the hunting season. He has his dog with him on a leash, and carries the hare he has killed as proudly as a king wears his crown.

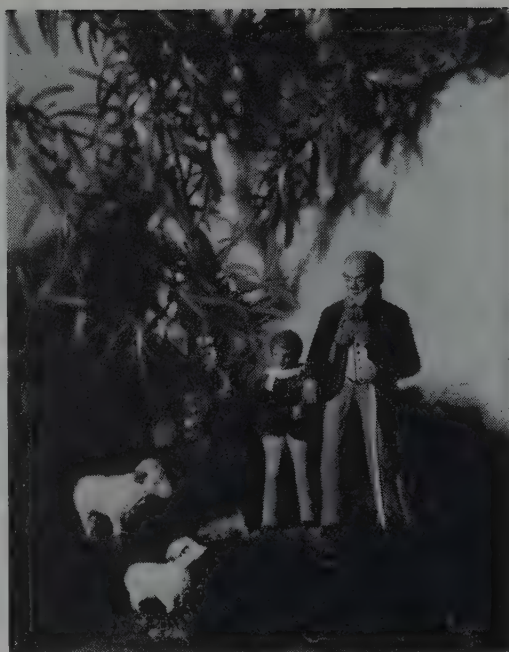
Many of the santons surprise us by the harmonious richness of their costumes. Here is old Jourdan with a polka-dot

yellow waistcoat and a red tie knotted under his high collar. Children, and their parents too, never tire of admiring his breeches, leggings, and blue-and-white striped bonnet.

It is especially interesting to notice how the santons have followed the changes that have taken place in home life and public life in Provence over a century and a half. Those made in the early 1800s were dressed in the style of their day. As styles changed in the world, so they changed in the santons which reflected the world. When it became customary for men to ride horseback through the lowlands taking care of their cattle, a new popular figure appeared, similar to our western cowboy. Thus, in the Provence of today, the tradition of the santons maintains its old appeal to the children in being up-to-date and close to reality.

It would be easy to imagine that these figures represent no more than an interest and pride in local customs and social developments. There are series of postal cards sold to tourists that are just that, and nothing more. But the application of the dramatic convention of the "Pastorale" to the *santi belli* from Naples produced something new which was animated by a new idea. We have here not a mere secular presentation of Provençal peasant society of the nineteenth century, but something much more like an offertory procession. Here every member of that society offered himself and the fruits of his own professional skill to the Christ Child. All the working people of Provence were on their way to Bethlehem, returning to God the gifts with which He had endowed them. To the rather static and timeless scene of the Holy Family they added a note of the living, the local, and the contemporary, but it was added not as an artistic refinement, but as an act of true religion.

The first name we have of a maker of clay santons is that of a man called



THE BLIND MAN, though he has no material gift to offer, has himself led to the manger by a little boy.

Glorian. He was followed by Agnel, who was selling his figures in Marseilles in 1808. The names of the artists who followed are still well known;—Leon Simon, Guichard, Lamy, Goutran, Chabaud, Trupheme, and a man named Jourdan from Aix.

Fashioning the santons is an art in which a whole family can participate. After the clay is made workable, the artist models his figurine. When he has obtained the expression and appearance he wants, he takes a plaster mold. The mold is made in two principal parts with a variable number of secondary parts for the arms, hats, and various accessories that characterize the type. The parts that are made separate from the body are attached to it later with a special adhesive. To fill the mold, the maker takes a small quantity of the prepared clay, makes a little ball or roll between his fingers, and presses it gently into the prepared hollow. When



MAKING SANTONS is a craft well adapted to family production. Different stages of the work are suited to different degrees of skill. Preparation of clay, filling molds, touching up and attaching special adjuncts, and finally the painting of clothes and features, call for abilities of various kinds. The photographs are reproduced here by courtesy of the author.

all the depressions in one half of the mold are filled, the other section is filled in the same way. Then the two parts are brought together and connected on the guide marks that have been provided. They are pressed and tied firmly together until the clay in the two faces of the mold is fused together to form the figure. Ten minutes later the clay is dry enough to be taken out. The santon is then inspected and retouched if need be, and put out in the sun to dry.

The figurine changes color gradually as it hardens. When completely dry, it is given a bath in a solution of gelatine or other similar material to harden it further

and give it a gloss. This coating also serves to provide a good ground for the application of the pigment. Without it the colors would run into one another and lose their sharpness of outline.

It is in the evening that the santon maker and his family do this work. The santons to be painted are all aligned in as many rows as there are characters—for instance, all the fishmongers of the same type and size are set side by side. The same is done for each character. The faces are painted first, then the hair, the hats and all the items of clothing. This serial method of painting saves pigments and time and also helps to maintain the use

of certain colors for various parts of the clothing which have been used for a century and have become traditional. It also prevents the artist from over-refining his work, since he has to proceed rapidly. Thanks to this simplification, the production of the figurines progresses with dispatch.

Until the last quarter of the nineteenth century santons were not fired in kilns so as to produce terra cotta figures, but were merely dried in the sun. Even as late as 1945 there was a good deal of opposition to the firing of the clay figures, and even today when the production of terra cotta has become general, many artists cling to the older method of making unfired figurines, spoken of affectionately as "our dearest children". It is to the fragility of the sun-baked santons that we must attribute the fact that for so long they were almost unknown outside of France. Unfired clay figures have to be handled with great care, and could not be shared with friends far away.

Many people who have studied the subject of European Christmas cribs are convinced that Marseilles excels all other important centers of production, such as Bavaria, the Tyrol, and Southern Italy. In *Les Santons de Provence*, G. Armand D'Agnel expresses this conviction thus:

"That there are larger and richer crèches in these three countries is unquestionable. But it is nonetheless true that nowhere else can be found santons of painted clay that can compete with the Provençal for artistry. For the figures made in other countries, unique in their way and in the beauty of the material used, far from helping their cause, defeat it because it is in contradiction either with the spirit of absolute poverty and adorable simplicity of the Infant lying on the straw between the donkey and the ox, or with the modest social position of the santons themselves and of their place in the stable. Everyone with taste admits it; the only thing asked of the clay personages of the Christmas feast is an attitude of humble



THE SANTONS EXPRESS the Christian truth that we must love our neighbors for the presence of Christ within them. Therefore, when we give presents to one another in the right spirit, we are in fact giving them to Him.



SANTONS MADE BY ROGER JOUVE OF MARSEILLES AND HIS WIFE. Top row, left to right, we have: the Tambourinaire; the Gypsy dancer; Ravi, the harmless village simpleton, so named because he seldom speaks but goes about enraptured and amazed at everything he sees. A tale is told of how Ravi rebuked the snobbish and patronizing Mayor at the crib-side, and gave an example of unexpected wisdom flowing from the mouth of innocence. At the extreme right, Vincent the romantic young basket-maker. Middle row: Fagot seller; Shepherd; Shepherdess with newborn lamb to be presented at the midnight Mass; Woman of Arles. Bottom row: Knife-grinder—"Little Jesus . . . give us the pride in our work of the knife-grinder"; blind man guided by his grandson; and finally, old couple.

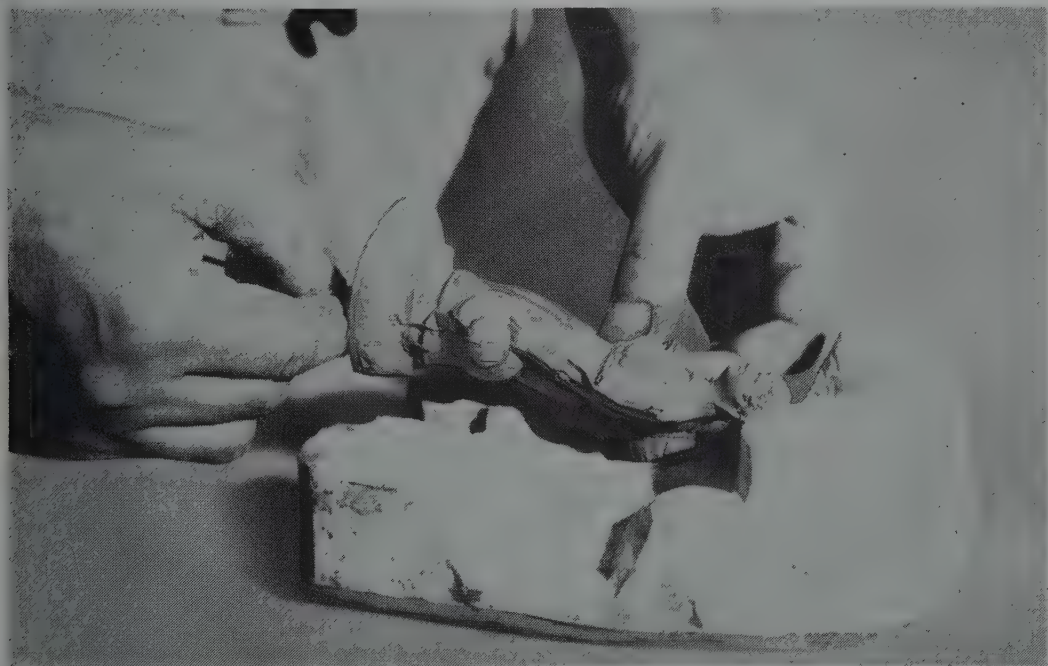
confidence, an air of naive goodheartedness, an expression of joy real and profound, but sweet and restrained, in its manifestation."

Although the tradition of the Christmas crèche for use in the home is of comparatively recent origin in Provence, its roots can be traced back to the early days of Christianity. In a fascinating book entitled "The Christmas Crib", Nesta de Robeck has related the story of the crèche from its very beginnings in Bethlehem through the nineteenth century. She paints a vivid picture of the growth of interest in the crib, beginning in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, which as early as the fifth century was known as Sancta Maria ad Praesepe—Saint Mary's of the Crib. She also traces the extraordinary development of the carved figures made in Germany and the elaborate Christmas cribs of France and Spain and Portugal, and other countries. How-

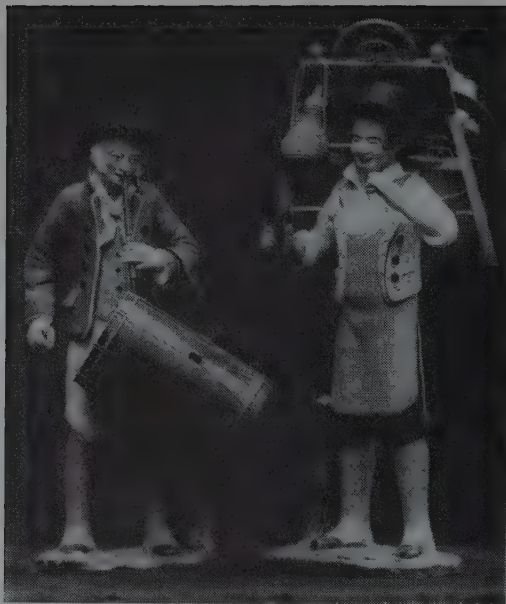
ever, the Christmas crib of Provence is something unique, because it is a part of the home celebration of the most festive of feast days, and it literally grew out of the peasant soil. Hence, it is close to the heart of everyone in Provence.

It is customary, and in fact traditional, to attribute the origin, or at least the popularization, of the Christmas crib to St. Francis of Assisi, for it was he who made the Christmas crib come to life in a very real sort of way on that memorable Christmas Eve in the Umbrian Hills in the year 1223. An old tradition in Provence has it that Pope John XXII, the second of the Avignon Popes, brought the custom of the Christmas crib to Provence in or about the year 1316. After that time, elaborate cribs with handsomely dressed dolls were made for the cathedrals and churches throughout the south of France.

Another thread in the tapestry is the



MARCEL CHARBONEL, one of the most noted of the *santonniers*, is shown here removing a partly dried figure from its molds. The *santon* is Vincent the Basket-maker, whose love for *Mirieo* still lives in Mistral's romantic poem.



THE DRUMMER and the Knife-grinder bring rural music and a practical household service to the Holy Family.

development of the miracle and mystery plays in France, England, Germany, and Italy. Later, the development of automatic toys, or automaton, in France, made the Christmas crib popular when it was presented in the form of a peep-show with many lively personalities adding to the gaiety and the spirit of the nativity scene.

Nesta de Robeck, writing of the development of the Christmas crèche in Marseilles in the late eighteenth century, has this to say: "There was a great fancy for mechanical cribs, often combined with

the music box, and an ingenious person named Laurent made cribs to suit contemporary politics. For instance, after the concordat between Pius VII and Napoleon, the Pope could be seen arriving in Bethlehem with the Cardinals and blessing the whole family; and in another, the Infant Jesus clapped His hands for the Pope, and would turn His head and hold out His arms while the shepherds and the magi passed before Him.

"Such tricks, however, soon palled, and attention turned to the clay figures which were being made by modelers who cared nothing for courts and arrogance, and a great deal for the people of Provence. . . . Every *santon* was concerned in taking all working Provence to Bethlehem, 'man, woman and child, old and young, some walking, some on donkeys, Guilheon, Perirour, or Jouan, someone always playing the bagpipes or fiddle.' The only set group in a Provençal 'Belan' (manger) is the Holy Family. The *santon* has proved his toughness, he has never become sentimental or romantic or vulgar; he was and is a worker of Provence admitting only two exceptions to his company, 'lou Saint Pape' and Napoleon."

In true peasant fashion, the *santon* makers of Provence have captured the spirit of Bethlehem and have dramatized their devotion and joy in a way that is warm, spontaneous, and touchingly personal. In the words of Marcel Provence, "the man who makes a *santon* plays God the Father, and like Him, fashions a man from clay."



FOUR FEASTS OR FOUR SEASONS

FOR THE FIRST THREE years of this periodical's existence the four issues were named for the seasons:—Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. With Volume IV the names Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and Michaelmas were substituted as having Christian rather than merely secular connotations. After just twenty years of these festal names, we are now returning to the seasonal ones.

We trust that no one will interpret this change as a concession to secularism. It is secularism that we exist to oppose; secularism in its aesthetic as well as its commercial aspects—that secularism which is destroying before our eyes the beautiful world that God has created for us. When we make peace with secularism we will have become renegades.

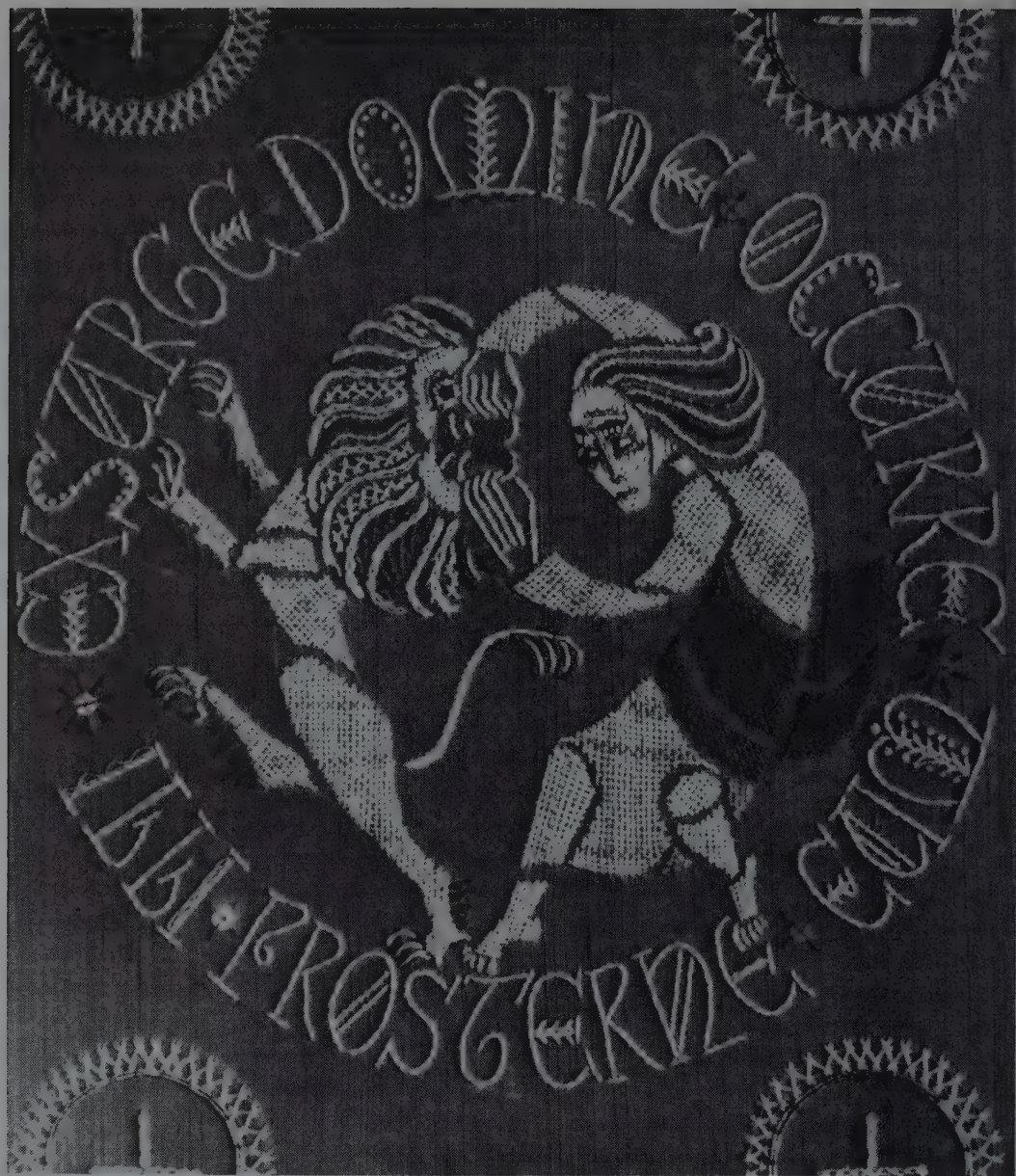
But the Lord Who accepted birth at

Christmas, defeated death at Easter, and fortified His followers at Pentecost, is the same Lord Who gave us our sun and divided our year into four seasons, each ushered in by a solstice or an equinox. For the purposes of our publication these cardinal points are as important as are the Christian feasts, for our message is not to believers only but to all men and women of good will who would join together to restore to human beings humanity in work.

And so, beginning with this number, our publication dates will be December 22nd for the Winter issue, March 20th for the Spring, June 21st for the Summer, and September 22nd for the Autumn issues. And to inaugurate this change of names, we print here these verses—

TO THE SUN, AT HIS WINTER SOLSTICE

Champion of life and conqueror of cold,
Turn with the splendor of your precious eye
This meagre, frozen earth to glittering gold.
Chaos and night deny, darkness defy.
The time is here to halt your slow retreat,
Lest all your hyperborean children die.
The time is here your triumphs to repeat.
The south behind you, make your stand today
And northward march. Your victory complete.
The longest night matches the shortest day.
Strengthen your beams, sharpen your shafts henceforth
And at high noon slant down with steeper ray.
On your victorious journey now set forth
To melt the snow and all the thick-ribbed ice,
And bring to life the wasted frozen north.
O Sun of Justice, seize your glittering sword.
You are the way, we know, to Paradise.
Bring light into our darkness. Hasten, Lord.



Embroidered purple cope designed and executed by Edith Ostendorf of Paderborn, Westfalia, Germany, for the Cathedral of Paderborn. To the right, front view of the vestment. Above, detail showing the slaying of the lion by Sampson. Reproduced by courtesy of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Christliche Kunst. Munich.



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